

United States General Accounting Office

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**GAO**

**Report to the Chairman, Committee on  
Armed Services, House of  
Representatives**

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March 1994

**SPECIAL OPERATIONS  
FORCES**

**Force Structure and  
Readiness Issues**



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United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

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**National Security and  
International Affairs Division**

B-256218

March 24, 1994

The Honorable Ronald V. Dellums  
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In response to the former Chairman's request, we assessed how the Special Operations Command determines its force levels and mix of active and reserve forces and examined issues impacting the readiness of special operations forces.

Unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 5 days after the issue date. At that time, we will send copies to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Armed Services; the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy; the Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

Please contact me at (202) 512-3504 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

Sincerely yours,

Richard Davis  
Director, National Security  
Analysis

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# Executive Summary

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## Purpose

As a result of problems with several special operations missions in the 1980s, including the failed attempt to rescue U.S. hostages from Iran in April 1980, Congress directed the creation of a joint service special operations command that would be responsible for ensuring the combat readiness of assigned forces. In April 1987 the Secretary of Defense established the U.S. Special Operations Command. In response to a request from the Chairman, House Committee on Armed Services, GAO assessed how the Command determines its force levels and mix of active and reserve forces and examined issues impacting the readiness of special operations forces.

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## Background

Special operations are conducted independently or in coordination with conventional forces during peacetime—operations short of declared war or intense warfare—and war. Special operations forces differ from conventional forces in that they are specially organized, trained, and equipped to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional means.

On November 14, 1986, Congress enacted Public Law 99-661, section 1311, to revitalize special operations and correct deficiencies identified in the nation's ability to conduct special operations. The law directed the President to establish a unified combatant command for special operations to ensure that special operations forces were combat ready and prepared to conduct specified missions. The law required the Secretary of Defense to assign all U.S.-based active and reserve special operations forces to the Command and special operations forces stationed overseas to the Atlantic, Pacific, Southern, Central, and European combatant commands.

To ensure that special operations were adequately funded, Congress later directed the Department of Defense to include a new special operations budget category, major force program-11 (MFP-11), in its future years defense plan. MFP-11 provides the Command with funding authority for the development and acquisition of equipment, materials, supplies, and services peculiar to special operations. Legislation makes the military services responsible for providing standard equipment and supplies to their forces assigned to unified combatant commands.

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## Results in Brief

The Command had inherited most of its present force structure from the military services by 1988. It determines its future force structure

requirements through an analytical process that considers wartime and peacetime needs. About 50 percent of the Command's planned force structure is needed to meet peacetime requirements. Peacetime needs have grown considerably as operations such as peacekeeping, peacemaking, and humanitarian assistance have increased.

The Department of Defense's Status of Resources and Training System compares a unit's resources to those needed to undertake its wartime missions. The Command's readiness, as measured by this system, has improved only slightly since the Command was established. Equipment shortages in active forces and personnel and personnel specialty shortages in reserve forces have been the primary causes for the lack of significant improvements. Although defense planning guidance states that this system will be used to measure the readiness of forces, the Command believes that this system does not adequately reflect the capabilities and interoperability improvements of its forces.

Other factors could negatively impact readiness in the future. Specifically, resources available to improve the readiness of special operations forces could be reduced by the use of (1) Air Force and Army special operations units for conventional combat search and rescue operations on a routine basis, (2) special operations funds to maintain reserve forces that could be excess to requirements, and (3) special operations funds for expenses that are not unique to special operations.

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## Principal Findings

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### Future Force Level and Mix Determined by Analytical Process and National Policies

The Command's force structure has changed little from the structure it had inherited from the military services by 1988. According to the Command, the changes have primarily been reorganizations to improve command and control. For example, in 1989 the Army converted its 1st Special Operations Command to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

The Command's force structure development process begins with its joint mission analysis. The analysis is used to develop a mission needs force, which is analyzed and adjusted based on planning factors, basing considerations, and affordability to arrive at the objective force. The Command then adjusts this force based on the Department of Defense's

fiscal guidance to arrive at the program force, which becomes the basis for the Command's budget request.

Special operations forces support the theater combatant commands to achieve national security objectives in peacetime and war. These forces have become an integral part of the theater commander's peacetime strategy. For example, the Southern Command plans to use special operations forces for counterdrug and counterinsurgency missions and assistance to foreign nations. The theater combatant commanders' needs for special operations forces have grown considerably as operations short of war have increased. As a result of factoring increased peacetime demands into the Command's joint mission analysis, about 50 percent of the Command's planned force structure is for peacetime forward presence in key regions of the world.

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### Data Showed Slight Improvement in Command's Readiness

Although Congress mandated that the Command ensure the combat readiness of assigned forces, data from the Status of Resources and Training System showed that the forces' readiness posture has only slightly improved since the Command was established. When the Command inherited its original force structure in 1987, about 22 percent of its units possessed the resources required to undertake their full wartime missions (a rating of C-1). Through May 1993, about 30 percent of the units were rated C-1. The percent of active units reporting C-1 ratings had improved from 38 percent in 1987 to 43 percent through May 1993. The percent of reserve units reporting C-1 had remained about the same with 14 percent of units reporting C-1 ratings in 1987 and 15 percent through May 1993. The Command identified equipment shortages in active forces and personnel and personnel specialty shortages in reserve forces as the primary problem areas. According to the Command, other intangible indicators such as improved equipment, interoperability of forces, and training need to be included when considering readiness.

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### Factors That Could Reduce Future Readiness

The Command believes that maintaining unneeded reserve forces is adversely affecting its operations and will cost about \$355 million through fiscal year 1999. Although GAO did not validate the Command's position, it believes that any use of financial resources for unneeded structure would not be prudent when the defense budget is declining. The Department plans to inactivate the unneeded units by the end of fiscal year 1994.

Special operations units were needed for conventional combat search and rescue of downed pilots during and after Operation Desert Storm because the Air Force had transferred its search and rescue assets to the Command. Although the Air Force is acquiring assets to assume responsibility for conventional combat search and rescue missions in more theaters, it does not plan to station a rescue unit in Europe. Until the Air Force reassumes the theater search and rescue responsibility for downed pilots, special operations forces will have to continue to perform these missions, which in the past have degraded the readiness of units and restricted the availability of limited assets.

The Command will have unneeded Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) reserve positions if it receives and fills additional training positions in active forces. Current mobilization plans call for reserve SEALs to fill training positions if current active duty SEALs are deployed. The new active duty positions, however, would be for personnel who would not deploy. Thus, if the Secretary of Defense authorizes these additional active duty positions, the SEAL reservists would no longer have a wartime mission. At the time GAO completed its audit work in December 1993, the Naval Special Warfare Command had no alternative plan for using or eliminating the SEAL reserve positions.

To ensure that the Command has the authority to control or influence resource decisions, Congress mandated that MFP-11 include funding for equipment, materials, supplies, and services peculiar to special operations. Although items and services peculiar to special operations are defined in Joint Publication 3-05, the Command and the services have used varied definitions in their agreements. Consequently, MFP-11 funds have been used for expenses that are not peculiar to special operations as defined by Joint Publication 3-05. This use of MFP-11 funds for common items and services could reduce the readiness of special operations forces.

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## Recommendations

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense take the following actions:

- Direct the Secretary of the Air Force to develop a plan that meets the combatant commander's requirements for combat search and rescue in Europe with the least impact on special operations assets.
- Notify Congress of its plans to eliminate reserve forces the Command has deemed to be excess.
- Eliminate reserve SEAL positions that would be excess if the Special Operations Command receives additional active SEAL training positions.

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- Direct the Special Operations Command and the military services to consistently use and apply the agreed-upon definition of items and services peculiar to special operations from Joint Publication 3-05.

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## Agency Comments

In written comments on a draft of this report, the Department of Defense agreed with most of GAO's findings and the need to notify Congress of its plans to eliminate reserve forces. However, the Department stated that any discussion of additional active SEAL positions is speculation at this time and it is, therefore, premature to assume that reserve SEAL personnel are excess. The Command has identified the requirement for the additional SEAL positions and expects to request approval for those positions in fiscal year 1996 at the earliest. Therefore, GAO continues to believe that if those additional positions are approved and filled, the reserve SEAL positions would be excess.

The Department also said that there is no need for the Air Force to develop a plan to meet combat search and rescue requirements in Europe because the Air Force already has such a plan. According to Department officials, the Air Force has a plan to meet combat search and rescue requirements during a major regional conflict such as Desert Storm. However, it has no plan to meet combat search and rescue requirements for lesser regional operations such as enforcing the no-fly zone and cease-fire in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because operations such as those in Bosnia can last for extended periods of time and degrade the readiness of special operations units, GAO continues to believe that the Air Force needs to develop a plan to meet its full combat search and rescue requirements.

The Department stated that the Command and the services appropriately use their agreements to define what items and services are peculiar to special operations because an item in one service could be considered special operations-peculiar while the same item in another service could be considered common. The Department cited the M-16 rifle, which is common for the Army but special operations-peculiar to the Navy. GAO continues to believe that the definition of items and services peculiar to special operations from Joint Publication 3-05 provides the appropriate parameters for the agreements between the Command and the services. Without such parameters, the agreements will continue to include varied definitions, which could lead to varied interpretations of items and services peculiar to special operations.



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**Abbreviations**

GAO	General Accounting Office
MFP	major force program
SEAL	Sea-Air-Land
SORTS	Status of Resources and Training System

# Introduction

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Several failed special operations missions in the early 1980s prompted Congress to question the special operations capabilities of U.S. forces. Because of deficiencies identified with those capabilities, Congress directed the President to establish a joint service special operations capability under a single command in section 1311 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1987, Public Law 99-661. The command was to be responsible for ensuring the combat readiness of assigned forces and for conducting assigned missions. In April 1987 the Secretary of Defense established the U.S. Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

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## Legislation Unifies U.S. Capabilities to Conduct Special Operations

In response to the failed rescue of U.S. hostages from Iran in April 1980, the Joint Chiefs of Staff established a commission to examine special operations issues. The commission identified deficiencies in organization, planning, training, and command and control and recommended the creation of a permanent joint special operation capability to overcome the deficiencies.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. intervention in Grenada in 1983 and the U.S. response to the terrorist hijacking of a Trans World Airline aircraft and the Achille Lauro cruise liner in 1985 focused congressional attention on the capabilities of special operations forces and raised questions concerning whether the capabilities were sufficiently integrated.

On November 14, 1986, Congress enacted Public Law 99-661, section 1311, to revitalize special operations and correct deficiencies identified in the nation's ability to conduct special operations. The law directed the President to establish a unified combatant command<sup>2</sup> for special operations to ensure that special operations forces were combat ready and prepared to conduct specified missions.

The law required, unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of Defense, the assignment of all active and reserve special operations forces stationed in the United States to the Command and special operations units stationed overseas to the Atlantic, Pacific, Southern, Central, and European combatant commands. By March 1988 most forces categorized

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<sup>1</sup>Holloway Commission Rescue Mission Report, August 1980.

<sup>2</sup>A combatant command has a broad and continuing mission under a single commander and is composed of significant assigned components of two or more services. Such a command is established and so designated by the President, through the Secretary of Defense, with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

as having a primary special operations mission had been assigned to the Command.<sup>3</sup>

The Defense Department's reluctance to implement section 1311 of Public Law 99-661 prompted Congress to enact additional reforms in 1987 and 1988. In December 1987 Congress enacted Public Law 100-180, which directed the Secretary of Defense to provide sufficient resources to the Command to accomplish its duties and responsibilities. The legislation further stipulated that the Department establish a new special operations budget category, major force program-11 (MFP-11), in its future years defense plan. In September 1988 Congress enacted Public Law 100-456 (section 712), which made the Command responsible for (1) preparing and submitting to the Secretary of Defense budget proposals and program recommendations for assigned forces and (2) exercising authority, control, and direction over its budgetary expenditures, including limited authority over the expenditures of funds for special operations forces assigned to other commands.

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## Activities Assigned to Special Operations Forces

Public Law 99-661 listed 10 activities over which the Command would exercise authority as they relate to special operations. These activities are as follows:

- Direct actions are short duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions to (1) seize, destroy, or inflict damage on a specified target or (2) destroy, capture, or recover designated personnel or material.
- Strategic reconnaissance is conducted to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection means, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrological, geographic, or demographic characteristics of a particular area. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance.
- Unconventional warfare is a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces that are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence collection, and evasion and escape.

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<sup>3</sup>Special Operations Command: Progress in Implementing Legislative Mandates (GAO/NSIAD-90-166, Sept. 28, 1990).

- Foreign internal defense is conducted to assist another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. Special forces train, advise, and otherwise assist host nation military and paramilitary forces.
- Counterterrorism is the application of highly specialized capabilities to preempt or resolve terrorist incidents abroad, including (1) hostage rescue, (2) recovery of sensitive materiel from terrorist organizations, and (3) direct action against the terrorist infrastructure.
- Civil affairs operations are to establish, maintain, influence, or strengthen relations between U.S. and allied military forces, civil authorities, and people in a friendly or occupied country or area.
- Psychological operations are to support other military operations through the use of mass media techniques and other actions to favorably influence the emotions, attitudes, and behavior of a foreign audience on behalf of U.S. interests.
- Humanitarian assistance is conducted to relieve or reduce the results of natural or man-made disasters or other endemic conditions such as human pain, disease, hunger, or privation that might present a serious threat to life or loss of property. This assistance supplements or complements the efforts of host nation civil authorities or agencies that may have the primary responsibility for providing this assistance.
- Theater search and rescue is performed to recover distressed personnel during wartime or contingency operations.
- Other activities are specified by the President or the Secretary of Defense.

Special operations forces differ from conventional forces in that they are specially organized, trained, and equipped to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional means. Special operations are conducted independently or in coordination with conventional forces during peacetime—operations short of declared war or intense warfare—and war. Political/military considerations frequently shape special operations and often require clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques. Special operations also significantly differ from conventional operations because of enhanced physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.

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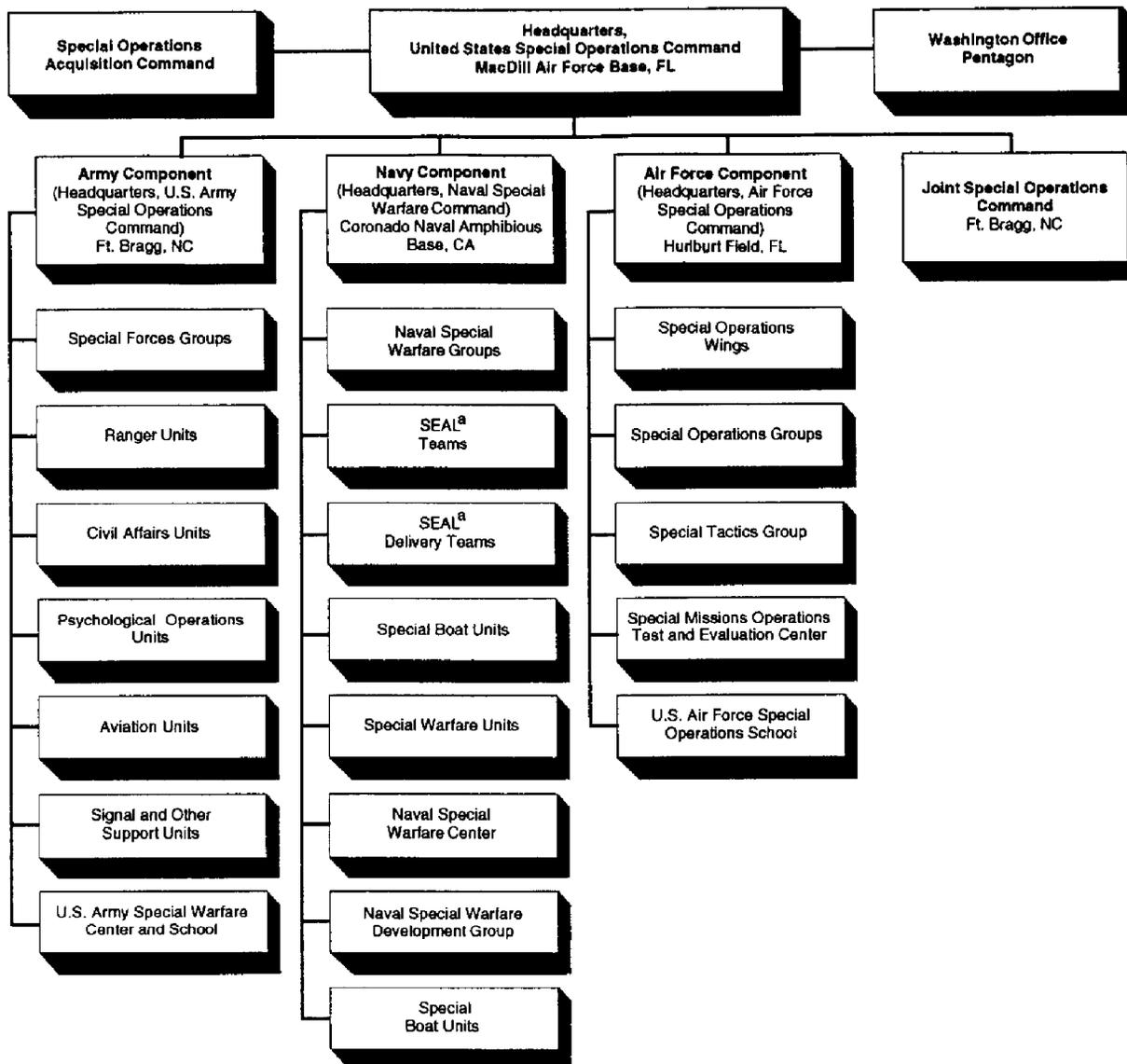
## Special Operations Command Responsibilities and Organizational Structure

The Special Operations Command is primarily responsible for providing combat-ready special operations forces to the five geographic combatant commands in support of U.S. national security interests. The Command is not limited to a specific geographic area of responsibility but must respond wherever the President or the Secretary of Defense directs in peacetime and across the complete spectrum of conflict.

The Command has three service components, each of which is a major command: the Army Special Operations Command at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina; the Naval Special Warfare Command at the Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado, California; and the Air Force Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field, Florida. The Joint Special Operations Command, a subunified command, is located at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. The Special Operations Command's fiscal year 1994 budget exceeds \$3 billion. It has a planned end strength of 46,126 personnel for fiscal year 1994.

The active and reserve component commands and their forces are shown in figure 1.1. Appendix I describes these commands and forces.

Figure 1.1: Active and Reserve Special Operations Component Forces Assigned to the Command



<sup>a</sup>Sea-Air-Land units.

Source: Special Operations Command.

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## Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

In response to a request from the Chairman, House Committee on Armed Services, we assessed how the Command determines its force levels and mix of active and reserve forces and examined issues impacting the readiness of special operations forces.

To determine the process used to generate special operations force levels and mix, we analyzed operational plans, studies, reports, testimonies, briefings, national security and military strategies, concepts of operations to implement the strategies, force structure evaluations, and master planning procedures. We compared the Command's initial and planned force structures and evaluated the basis for unit additions and deletions. We discussed force development policies and procedures with officials at the Special Operations Command; the Army and Air Force Special Operations Commands; the Naval Special Warfare Command; and Headquarters, U.S. Southern Command. Moreover, we observed the Special Operations Command's first force structure board that reviewed aggregate force structure requirements and recommended force structure actions to be included in the fiscal year 1996-2001 program objectives memorandum.<sup>4</sup> We discussed the results of this board with cognizant Command officials and officials at the Naval Special Warfare Command.

To assess whether the Command has improved the readiness of special operations forces, we analyzed legislation establishing the Command and corresponding hearings and testimony. We analyzed and compared a judgmental sample of the Special Operations Command's Status of Resources and Training System reports to identify the readiness posture of assigned Army, Navy, and Air Force active and reserve forces since the Command was established. We examined memorandums of agreement between the Command and the services and reviewed financial documents to evaluate whether MFP-11 funds were being spent for equipment, goods, and services peculiar to special operations. Moreover, we discussed MFP-11 expenditures with Command finance and legal officials and officials from the three special operations component command headquarters.

We reviewed the roles and missions of special operations forces to determine whether they were consistent with legislation. We discussed the roles and missions of forces with officials from the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the three component commands, and the U.S. Southern and Central Commands. We reviewed the role of special operations forces in conventional search and rescue missions and analyzed deployment data

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<sup>4</sup>This annual memorandum is submitted by the Department component head to the Secretary of Defense. It recommends the total resource requirements and programs of the component, commensurate with the parameters of the Secretary's fiscal guidance.

to determine the extent to which special operations units are conducting conventional search and rescue missions. We reviewed Air Force planning documents and discussed the conduct of conventional search and rescue missions with cognizant Special Operations Command, Air Force Special Operations Command, and Air Force Air Combat Command officials.

We analyzed Special Operations Command deployment data to identify the theater commanders' use of special operations forces. We also analyzed Command force structure evaluations recommending the elimination of reserve components and reviewed cost data associated with maintaining these components. However, we did not validate the Command's force structure evaluations or the cost of maintaining forces it determined to be excess. We reviewed the Special Operations Command's methodology and justification for expanding its Navy SEAL force and discussed the need for reserve SEALs with Special Operations Command and Naval Special Warfare Command officials.

Our review was conducted at the following locations from November 1992 through December 1993 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards:

- Washington, D.C. area: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict, the Pentagon; Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Special Operations Division, the Pentagon; Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Program Analysis and Evaluation, the Pentagon; Washington Office, U.S. Special Operations Command, the Pentagon; Office of the Chief of the Army Reserve, Rosslyn, Virginia; National Guard Readiness Center, Arlington, Virginia; and Headquarters, 352nd Civil Affairs Command, Riverdale, Maryland.
- Fort Bragg, North Carolina: Headquarters, Army Special Operations Command; U.S. Army Special Forces Command; U.S. Army Special Operations Integration Command; U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School; and U.S. Army Civil Affairs/Psychological Operations Command.
- Florida: Headquarters, U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base; Headquarters, Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base; and Headquarters, Air Force Special Operations Command, Hurlburt Field.
- Coronado, California: Headquarters, Naval Special Warfare Command; Naval Special Warfare Center; Naval Special Warfare Group One; and SEAL Team 3.
- Panama: Headquarters, U.S. Southern Command; Special Operations Command South; C-Company 3rd Battalion-7th Special Forces Group; 3rd

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**Chapter 1**  
**Introduction**

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- Special Operations Support Company; 617th Special Operations Aviation Detachment; Naval Special Warfare Unit 8; and Special Boat Unit 26.
  - Langley Air Force Base, Virginia: Air Rescue Directorate, Air Combat Command; and Center for Low Intensity Conflict.

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# Future Force Levels and Mix Determined by Analytical Process and National Policies

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The Special Operations Command had inherited most of its present force structure from the military services by 1988. The additions, deletions, and reorganizations represent about a 14.5-percent net increase in total military personnel strength from fiscal year 1988 through fiscal year 1994. The increase occurred at a time when the Department of Defense's personnel levels were decreasing. The Command uses a joint mission analysis to determine its future force structure requirements.

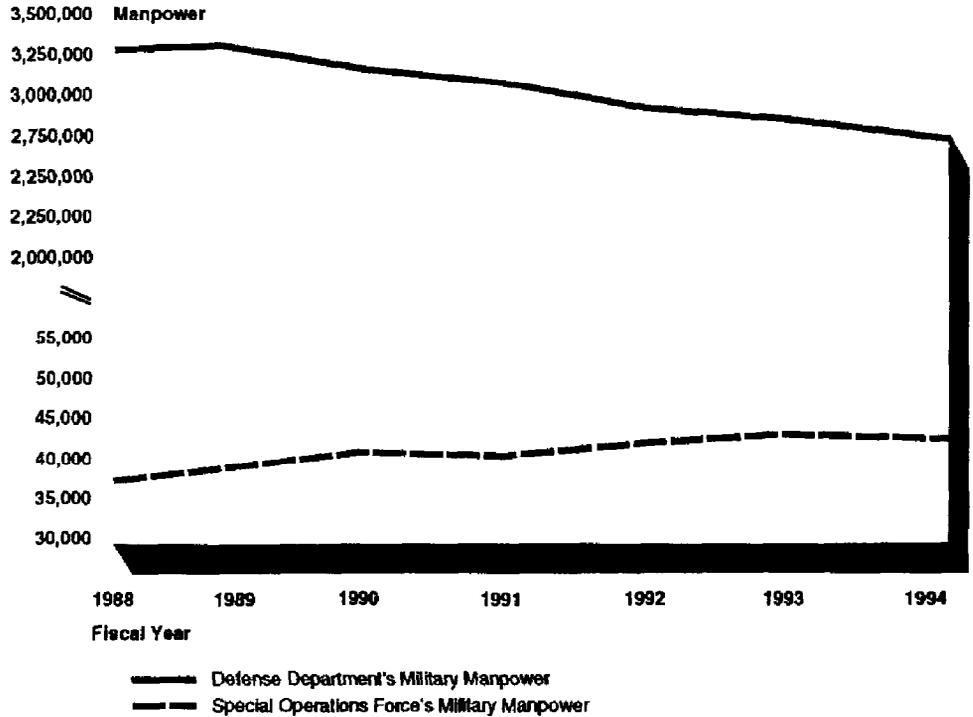
Special operations forces support the theater combatant commands to achieve national security objectives in peacetime and war. The theater combatant commands' needs for special operations forces during peacetime have grown considerably as national security policies have emphasized missions such as peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. The result is that about 50 percent of the Special Operations Command's planned force structure is to meet war requirements and 50 percent is to provide a peacetime U.S. forward presence in key regions of the world.

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## Force Structure Is Mostly Inherited

Many of the changes to the Command's force structure have been reorganizations to improve command and control. For example, in 1989 the Army converted its 1st Special Operations Command to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command. One year later, the Air Force converted most of its 23rd Air Force to the Air Force Special Operations Command. Various force structure changes have increased the total military personnel strength by about 14.5 percent from fiscal year 1988 through fiscal year 1994. As figure 2.1 shows, the Command's personnel levels increased as the Defense Department's personnel levels decreased.

Figure 2.1: Personnel Levels of the Command and the Defense Department



Source: Department of Defense.

## Command Uses an Analytical Process to Develop Future Force Structure Needs

The Command's force structure development process begins with its joint mission analysis. The analysis provides information to the Command's master planning process, which provides inputs to the Joint Strategic Planning System<sup>1</sup> and the Department's Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System.<sup>2</sup>

Through the joint mission analysis, the Command develops a mission needs force. According to the Command, this force is needed to meet the national missions,<sup>3</sup> two major regional contingency scenarios, and

<sup>1</sup>This is the primary formal means through which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff carries out his statutory responsibilities under Title 10 of the U.S. Code and Department of Defense Directive 5100.1.

<sup>2</sup>This system produces the Department of Defense's portion of the President's Budget.

<sup>3</sup>National missions are sensitive, compartmented, and unilateral special operations or psychological operations directed by the National Command Authority.

peacetime engagement scenarios for the five geographic combatant commands. These scenarios, which include multiple missions, are developed by the Command, approved by the geographic combatant commanders, and coordinated with the Defense Intelligence Agency.

The mission needs force is analyzed and adjusted by three distinct boards—Force Structure, Aviation, and Maritime Mobility—based on planning factors, basing considerations, and affordability. The boards' decisions result in the objective force, which is required to adequately meet the theater combatant commanders' mission requirements at an acceptable level of risk. This force becomes the basis for the force structure section of the Special Operations Master Plan. The Command adjusts this force structure based on Department of Defense fiscal guidance to arrive at the program force,<sup>4</sup> which becomes the basis for the Command's budget request.

The analysis reviews special operations forces by theater and measures the ability of the program force to meet future mission needs derived from operational scenarios. The goal of the analysis is to determine program force capabilities and deficiencies, identify limiting factors, and develop and assess alternative courses of action to address shortfalls in force structure.

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## **National Security Policies Drive Expansive Need for Special Operations**

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Soviet and Eastern European communist systems in the late 1980s and early 1990s caused the United States to rethink its Cold War national security strategy. President Bush's 1991 security strategy shifted U.S. priorities from containing the Soviet Union and preparing for global war in Europe to stopping regional conflicts against uncertain adversaries. The new regional defense strategy required maintaining a diverse, highly ready force to meet a broad range of regional security problems that could threaten U.S. interests. In January 1993 the Secretary of Defense told Congress that special operations forces play a role in each element of the new defense strategy, particularly in forward presence and crisis response operations.

The Department's recently completed "bottom-up" review, which developed military strategies for the post-Cold War era, reinforced the regional defense strategy. Stationing and deploying U.S. military forces overseas in peacetime was seen as an essential element in dealing with the

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<sup>4</sup>This force includes the major combat and tactical support units approved by the Defense Department for each year of the future years defense plan.

new regional dangers and as a means to pursue new opportunities. While the Department stated that deterring and defeating major regional aggression will be the most demanding requirement of the new defense strategy, U.S. military forces are more likely to be involved in operations such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and other intervention operations that are short of declared or intense warfare. Special operations forces were seen as particularly well suited for intervention operations.

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### Demand for Special Operations Forces Has Increased

During combat operations, special operations missions might include locating, seizing, or destroying targets; performing strategic reconnaissance; and disorganizing, disrupting, or demoralizing enemy troops. For example, during Operation Desert Storm, special operations units were tasked to eliminate Iraqi radar units and aid conventional forces in locating Iraqi SCUD missile sites. Also, psychological operations and naval special operations forces simulated preparations for a large amphibious invasion, which kept elements of two Iraqi divisions in place on the Kuwaiti coast.<sup>5</sup>

During peacetime, special operations forces can contribute to regional stability through humanitarian assistance, foreign internal defense, counternarcotics, and counterterrorism activities. For example, after the Gulf War, special operations forces provided humanitarian assistance to Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq and Turkey in Operation Provide Comfort. Air Force special operations units air-dropped emergency supplies, while Army Special Forces, civil affairs, and psychological operations personnel located refugee camp sites and assisted indigenous leaders in training the refugees to become more self-sufficient. According to the Command, special operations forces saved thousands of lives by providing skilled personnel to (1) rebuild the civil infrastructure, (2) establish supply networks, and (3) furnish medical assistance and training. As of December 1993, Operation Provide Comfort continued to require special operations forces.

Special operations forces have become an integral part of the theater commanders' peacetime strategy. For example, the Southern Command has developed a peacetime engagement plan to accomplish forward presence operations. The Command's draft plan is the key document used to execute the theater strategy for countering threats and strengthening democracy and democratic institutions. The plan requires special

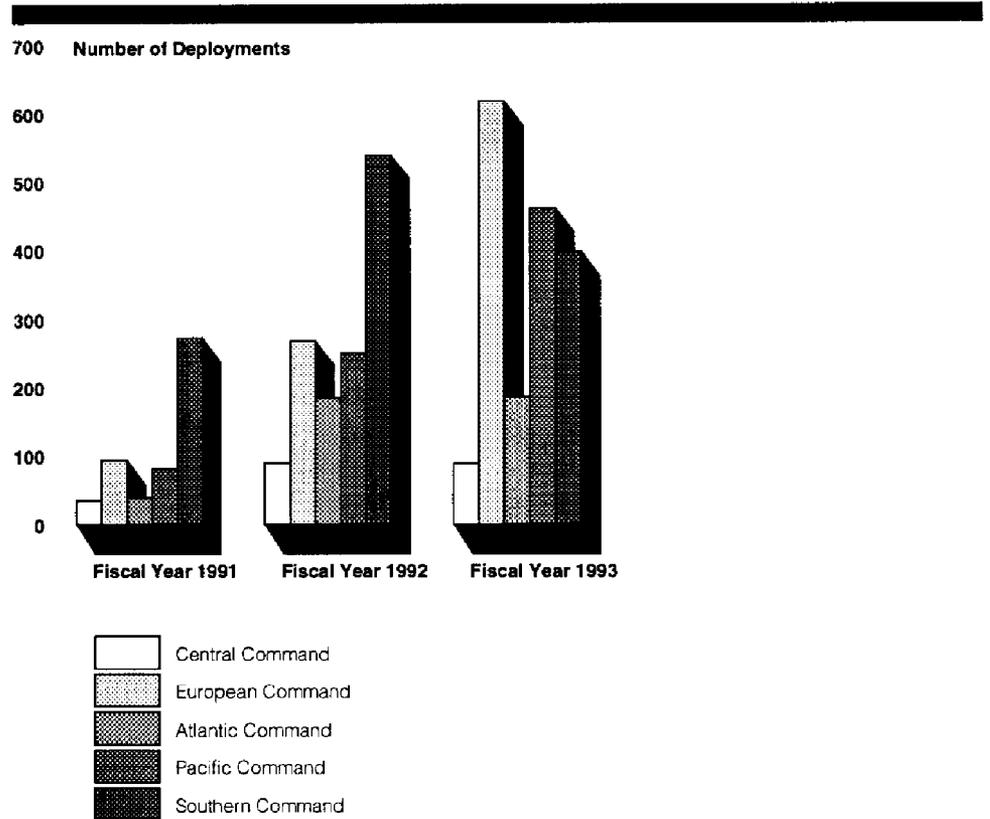
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<sup>5</sup>United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement 1993.

operations forces to perform counterdrug and counterinsurgency missions, provide assistance to foreign nations, and improve the professionalism of Central and South American militaries.

The theater combatant commanders' use of special operations forces have grown considerably as operations other than war have increased. The deployments of special operations forces increased over 300 percent from fiscal year 1991 through fiscal year 1993. Figure 2.2 shows the number of deployments by geographic theater.

Figure 2.2: Deployments of Special Operations Forces by Geographic Theater



Source: Special Operations Command.

As a result of the increased peacetime demand for special operations forces, about 50 percent of the Command's planned force structure is to

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**Chapter 2**  
**Future Force Levels and Mix Determined by**  
**Analytical Process and National Policies**

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meet a peacetime U.S. forward presence in key regions of the world. War requirements support the remaining 50 percent of the Command's planned force structure.

# The Command's Readiness Has Been and Could Continue to Be a Problem

Congress established the Special Operations Command in part to improve the combat readiness of special operations forces. Readiness data we reviewed showed that the Command's readiness has improved slightly, if both active and reserve forces are considered. Equipment shortages in active forces and personnel and personnel specialty shortages in reserve forces have been the primary causes for the limited improvements. The Command believes that these data do not adequately reflect the improvements it has made in the capabilities and interoperability of its forces.

There are other factors that could negatively impact the readiness of special operations forces in the future. Specifically, resources available to improve the readiness of special operations forces could be reduced by the use of (1) Air Force and Army special operations units for conventional combat search and rescue operations on a routine basis, (2) special operations funds to maintain reserve forces that could be excess to requirements, and (3) special operations funds for expenses that are not unique to special operations.

## Readiness Data Showed Slight Improvement in Command's Readiness

Congress mandated that the Special Operations Command ensure that its assigned forces are combat ready and adequately trained and equipped to conduct assigned missions. However, data we reviewed showed only a slight improvement in the readiness posture of these forces since the Command was established.

The Congressional Research Service recently reported that combat readiness was the Command's "number one priority," according to current and previous commanders.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, past and current Defense planning guidance directs that special operations forces maintain high readiness levels. For example, the Department's current planning guidance states that the Status of Resources and Training System (SORTS) will be used to measure the readiness of forces and directs that active and reserve special operations forces maintain the highest readiness level.

SORTS data show that, as a whole, the Command's readiness has improved slightly since it was established. SORTS compares a unit's resources to those needed to undertake its wartime mission.<sup>2</sup> These resources are

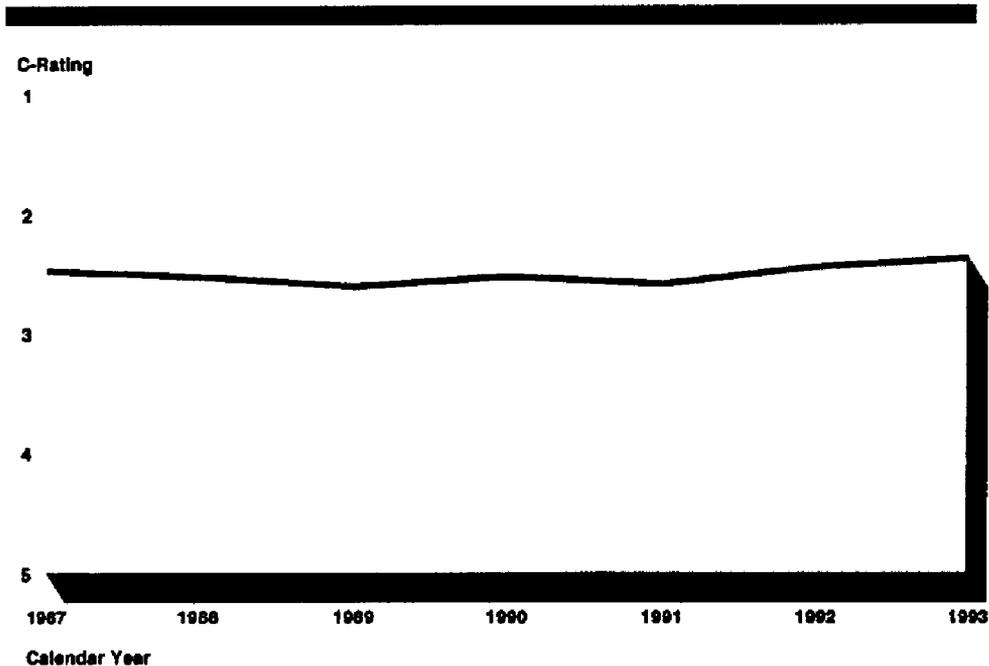
<sup>1</sup>Congressional Research Service Report, Special Operations Forces: An Assessment 1986-1993, July 30, 1993.

<sup>2</sup>According to the Command, the Department does not have a system that measures readiness for peacetime missions.

**Chapter 3**  
**The Command's Readiness Has Been and**  
**Could Continue to Be a Problem**

personnel, equipment and supplies on hand, equipment condition, and training. SORTS describes readiness in terms of category levels, or C-levels. These levels identify the degree to which a unit meets established standards. The Department of Defense ranks readiness from C-1 to C-4. A rating of C-1 indicates a unit possesses the required resources to undertake the full wartime mission it was organized or designed to meet. A rating of C-2 through C-4 indicates a unit has progressively fewer of the resources needed to undertake its wartime mission. Figure 3.1 shows the Command's average readiness indicators since it was established.

**Figure 3.1: Special Operations Command's Average Readiness Indicators**



Source: GAO analysis of Special Operations Command data.

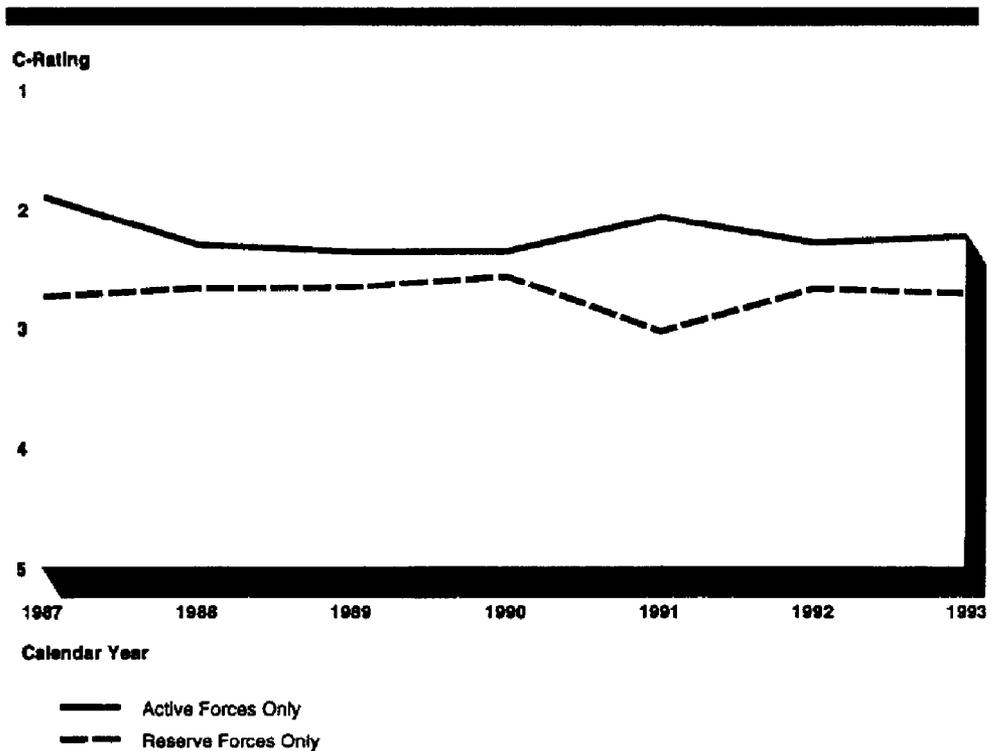
When the Command was established in 1987, about 22 percent of its units reported C-1 ratings. Through May 1993, about 30 percent of the units reported C-1 ratings. The readiness data showed that 38 percent of the Command's active forces reported C-1 ratings in 1987. This had increased to 43 percent through May 1993. The Command identified equipment shortages as the primary reasons for ratings less than C-1.

**Chapter 3**  
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**Could Continue to Be a Problem**

In contrast to the active units, only 14 percent of the reserve units reported C-1 ratings in 1987. Through May 1993, the reserves had sustained about the same status, with only 15 percent of its forces reporting C-1 ratings. Shortages in personnel and personnel specialties have been the reserves' primary resource shortfall.

The average readiness indicators for the active and reserve forces were about C-2 and C-3, respectively, when the Command originated. The readiness indicators have remained generally constant except for the Gulf War period, when the readiness of the active forces improved and the readiness of reserve forces declined. Figure 3.2 shows the active and reserve component average readiness indicators since the Command was established.

**Figure 3.2: Active and Reserve Component Average Readiness Indicators**



Source: GAO analysis of Special Operations Command data.

According to the Command, the SORTS data do not adequately capture the improved readiness status of its forces. Moreover, intangible indicators, such as improved equipment, interoperability of forces, and training have increased the Command's readiness to perform its missions. For example, the Command has identified improved mobility as its most important modernization concern for the 1990s. As a result, the Command is buying MH-47E and MH-60K Army special operations helicopters to increase low-level flight capabilities, and the Air Force Special Operations Command is buying MC-130H Combat Talon IIs for low-level infiltration and resupply operations. Navy Special Warfare mobility improvements include the MK V Special Operations Craft, which has greater speed and payload than the older MK III. Additionally, according to the Special Operations Command, changes have been made to improve the command and control of special operations forces through improved training, training facilities, and intelligence collection and dissemination.

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## Special Operations Forces Routinely Performing Combat Search and Rescue Missions That Limit Training

When Congress created the Special Operations Command, it identified theater search and rescue as a special operations activity insofar as it related to special operations. Under joint doctrine,<sup>3</sup> each service must provide forces capable of combat search and rescue in support of its own operations, and special operations forces should not be routinely tasked to perform conventional combat search and rescue. Nevertheless, Air Force special operations forces are routinely conducting extensive conventional combat search and rescue operations. Consequently, the readiness of some Air Force special operations units has been degraded, and the availability of assets to conduct special missions has been restricted.

The Air Force Special Operations Command was created in 1990 from the 23rd Air Force, which had combat search and rescue as one of its missions. The transfer left the Air Force without the specialized aircraft or trained aircrews to conduct this mission. The capability to perform this mission is being developed within the Air Force's Air Combat Command, which plans to station rescue squadrons throughout most of the world.

Although special operations forces are responsible for the combat search and rescue of their own forces when operating in environments that demand unique special operations capability, their equipment is not specifically designed, and their personnel are not specifically trained for conventional search and rescue missions. Moreover, special operations recovery missions differ substantially from the service's combat search

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<sup>3</sup>Doctrine For Joint Combat Search And Rescue, Joint Publication 3-50.2, Dec. 20, 1991.

and rescue operations. However, the Air Force does not yet have all the necessary assets to reassume this mission, and special forces have therefore been tasked to perform this role.

Air Force special operations units began conducting conventional combat search and rescue missions of downed pilots during Operation Desert Shield in October 1990 and continued to perform these missions in Saudi Arabia until relieved by Air Force units in February 1993. Command deployment data showed that from April 1991 to July 1993, Air Force special operations personnel deployed 68 times to provide theater combatant commanders with a conventional combat search and rescue capability. Army Special Forces supported these missions 31 times. Moreover, Army and Air Force special operations personnel and equipment continue to perform conventional search and rescue missions, some of which are classified.

According to a former Commander of the Special Operations Command, support for conventional search and rescue operations significantly reduces the readiness of special operations forces. Personnel responsible for operations within the Air Force Special Operations Command also stated that some post-Desert Storm combat search and rescue operations degraded readiness. For example, night flying restrictions by a host nation adversely impacted the ability of special operations aircrews stationed in that country to maintain night flying proficiency, thus degrading their readiness. In addition, special operations aircrews were unable to participate in scheduled training exercises due to conventional search and rescue missions, which could further impact readiness.

Although the Air Force is projected to have the assets it needs to reassume its search and rescue role from special operations by the end of fiscal year 1994, the Air Force does not plan to station a rescue squadron in Europe. It is, however, studying how best to perform this mission. Until the Air Force does reassume this responsibility, special operations forces will have to continue to perform this mission.

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## Reserve Forces Could Be Excess to Requirements

According to the Command, it has reserve forces that are not needed to meet contingency mission requirements. Moreover, Command officials stated that maintaining these excess forces will cost about \$355 million through fiscal year 1999. Although we did not validate the Command's position, we believe that any use of the Command's financial resources for unneeded structure would not be prudent while defense budgets are

declining. The Department plans to inactivate the unneeded units by the end of fiscal year 1994.

The Special Operations Command plans to add 12 active operational SEAL platoons by converting existing SEAL training elements into operational platoons. The Command intends to request additional active positions to replace the converted training positions. These positions would be filled by staff who would not deploy. If the planned expansion occurs, the reservists would no longer have a wartime mission.

**Excess Reserve Forces  
 Could Cost Millions to  
 Maintain**

In November 1990 the Department of Defense developed budget guidance that directed the deactivation of three Army National Guard and three Army Reserve Special Forces battalions. The Department subsequently rescinded the deactivation plans for the three Army Reserve battalions pending the results of the Command's joint mission analysis. Conferees for the 1993 Department of Defense Appropriations Act included in their report the expectation that the Army Special Operations Command would maintain existing Army National Guard Special Operations units through fiscal year 1993 and rejected any plan or initiative to expand the active component special operations forces to replace these National Guard units. The conferees further noted that in the fiscal year 1992 Defense Appropriations Act, Congress had limited any conversion of National Guard missions to the active components.

The Command's analysis validated the need to deactivate the six battalions and identified further reductions of reserve units. Table 3.1 lists the reserve forces that the Command identified for deactivation. The six battalions are in the 11th and 19th Special Forces Groups.

**Table 3.1: Reserve Forces the  
 Command Identified for Deactivation**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Reserve spaces</b>
1-245 Special Operations Aviation Battalion	463
19th Special Forces Group	1,040
5th Psychological Operations Group	495
11th Special Forces Group	1,266
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,264</b>

Source: Special Operations Command.

According to the Command, the forces listed in table 3.1 are linked to the drawdown of conventional forces in Europe and the Soviet threat and are not needed to meet contingency mission requirements. Moreover, according to the Command, maintaining the excess reserve structure will cost about \$355 million through fiscal year 1999. The Command stated that using funds to maintain excess force structure is adversely affecting the operating tempo of special operations forces.

According to the Department of Defense, it has a plan to inactivate the excess units by the end of fiscal year 1994. The specific units will be announced by the Department in the second quarter of fiscal year 1994.

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### **Reserve SEALs May Not Be Needed**

The Special Operations Command plans to expand its operational Navy SEAL platoons by 25 percent, from 48 to 60, in fiscal year 1996 at the earliest. According to the Command, these additional SEAL platoons are needed to meet increased deployments in support of the theater combatant commands. Although the Command has reported that it maintains a force structure of 60 SEAL platoons, only 48 platoons are operational and deployable. The 12 remaining platoon equivalents provide manpower to SEAL training elements.

The Command plans to convert existing SEAL training elements into operational platoons and request additional positions in the active force to replace the converted training positions. These spaces would be filled by staff who would not deploy.

The Command presently staffs the training elements with active component personnel who upon mobilization would be used to create the 12 additional operational SEAL platoons. According to the mobilization plan, SEAL reservists would then occupy the training positions.

If the Department authorizes the additional positions for the training personnel, the reservists would no longer have a wartime mission. At the time we completed our audit work in December 1993, the Naval Special Warfare Command had no alternative plan for using or eliminating the 318 SEAL reserve positions.

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## Special Operations Funds Are Being Used for Common Items and Base Operating Support

Legislation requires each service to equip its forces assigned to unified combatant commands. Congress intended MFP-11 to provide the Command with funding authority for the development and acquisition of equipment, materials, supplies, and services peculiar to special operations. Some MFP-11 funds have been used for expenses that are not peculiar to special operations as defined by Joint Publication 3-05. Moreover, the Command has assumed the responsibility of funding some base operating support obligations.

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## Command and Services Used Varied Definitions of Special Operations-Peculiar

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 assigns the services responsibility for administering and supporting their forces assigned to combatant commands. The Special Operations Command's memorandums of agreement with the services are the mechanism by which the services agree to provide common items and services. These memorandums define what is peculiar to special operations. Items and services that do not meet the definitions are to be provided by the services.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have defined items and services peculiar to special operations as follows:

"Equipment, materials, supplies, and services required for special operations mission support for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. It often includes nondevelopmental or special category items incorporating evolving technology but may include stocks of obsolete weapons and equipment designed to support indigenous personnel who do not possess sophisticated operational capabilities."

We found that the Command and the services have used varied definitions in their agreements. For example, the Command and the Air Force agreed that criticality of need for common items should be part of the definition. The agreement with the Army, on the other hand, does not cite criticality of need as an element for defining special operations-peculiar. In contrast, the Army's agreement specifically defines "common" as those equipment, services, or programs ordinarily found throughout the U.S. Army. For example, the agreement categorically states that the Army will procure, on a nonreimbursable basis, common or standard Army ammunition available through the U.S. Army and common individual and crew-served small arms and weapons systems.

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## MFP-11 Funds Used for Varied Items

As a result of the varied definitions and interpretations, MFP-11 funds have been used for common equipment and services. For example, during fiscal year 1992, the Command obligated \$787,000 for survival radios Army and Air Force special operations forces needed, despite the commonality of the radios within the services. Moreover, the Command included \$4.4 million for more of these radios in its fiscal year 1994 budget request. The Command also obligated almost \$26 million during fiscal year 1991 through 1993 for common weapons and ammunition. Command officials agreed that these items were not peculiar to special operations but said that MFP-11 funds were used because the services did not provide the levels of required support.

The disagreement surrounding the definition of special operations-peculiar is exemplified by the use of MFP-11 funds for an information management network at an estimated cost of \$73.6 million. According to the operational requirements document, the Department of the Army's 1987 Special Operations Modernization Action Program identified the need for a worldwide information management system that would support Army special operations forces. The Department of the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations designated this system as a critical priority, and as such, the Special Operations Command inherited the requirement. According to officials with the Command's Inspector General, the Army refused to provide funds for the system. After reviewing the operational requirements document, a Command lawyer concluded that the information system was not a system peculiar to special operations. Nevertheless, the Command's Requirements Oversight Council approved the system's development and acquisition in November 1992.

The Command and the Army are revising their memorandum of agreement. According to Command officials, the definition of special operations-peculiar remains a controversial point of negotiation. The Army wants to include in the definition common items of equipment that exceed Army authorization levels and usage rates. This would require the Command to program and budget MFP-11 funds to pay for these items. However, the Command's legal office disagreed with this position and stated that adoption of this language represents another step in the Army's retreat from its responsibilities to provide common items to special operations forces. As of November 1993, the Army and the Command had not agreed on a definition. According to a Command official, when a definition is agreed to, it will be incorporated into Joint Publication 3-05 because the present definition is too general to be useful. It will also be used in all memorandums of agreement as they are revised.

## MFP-11 Funds Used for Base Operating Support

Base operating support is administrative and logistical support necessary to supply, equip, and maintain bases and installations. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 assigns the services responsibility for providing base operating support to the combatant commands. However, under the act the Secretary of Defense may assign this responsibility or any part of this responsibility to other Department components, including the combatant commands.

In December 1991, the Defense Department, through a program budget decision, transferred funding responsibility for the Naval Special Warfare Command's base operating support from the Navy to the Special Operations Command, starting in fiscal year 1993. According to the budget decision, the transfer was made to streamline accounting and dispersing systems and align base operating support funds with the Navy policy for host-tenant agreements.

As a result of the decision, the Navy transferred base operating support funds to the Command for fiscal year 1993. According to Naval Special Warfare Command officials, the funds were inadequate to meet all base operating support requirements. The Special Operations Command has agreed to make up the shortfall.

Unlike the Navy, the Air Force retained responsibility for providing base operating support to Air Force units assigned to the Command. However, the Air Force Special Operations Command chose to spend \$127,000 in fiscal year 1993 MFP-11 funds for base operating support at Hurlburt Field, Florida. According to Air Force Special Operations Command officials, the Air Force failed to provide sufficient funds to meet base operating requirements.

The Conference Report on the Department of Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1994 directed the Special Operations Command to include in its fiscal year 1995 budget request the funds required to reimburse Fort Bragg for the base operating support it provided to U.S. Army special operations forces assigned there. According to the Department of Defense, this reimbursement contradicts Department policy and the existing Army and Command memorandum of agreement. Also, according to the Department, the Army special operations forces would be the only tenants at Fort Bragg that would be required to reimburse the installation for common support.

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## **Recommendations**

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense take the following actions:

- Direct the Secretary of the Air Force to develop a plan that meets the combatant commander's requirements for combat search and rescue in Europe with the least impact on special operations assets.
- Notify Congress of its plans to eliminate reserve forces the Command has deemed to be excess.
- Eliminate reserve SEAL forces that would be excess if the Special Operations Command receives additional active SEAL training positions.
- Direct the Special Operations Command and the military services to consistently use and apply the agreed-upon definition of items and services peculiar to special operations from Joint Publication 3-05.



# Special Operations Command's Major Subordinate Commands and Units

## Army Special Operations Command and Forces

The Command is responsible for all U.S.-based active and reserve Special Forces, Rangers, Special Operations Aviation, Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs, and support units and selected special mission and support units assigned by the Secretary of Defense. The Command includes about 30,000 active and reserve personnel.

Special Forces (Green Berets) are organized into five active and four reserve groups. The groups are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct the five primary special operations missions of direct action, special reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, and counterterrorism. Special Forces soldiers train, advise, and assist host nation military or paramilitary forces.

Rangers are organized into a regiment that contains a headquarters company and three battalions. There are no reserve Ranger units. The Rangers are rapidly deployable airborne light infantry units that are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct complex joint strike operations. These units can also operate as light infantry in support of conventional missions.

Special Operations Aviation is organized into an active regiment with three battalions, a detachment in Panama, and a National Guard battalion. These units provide dedicated specialized aviation support to other special operations forces. Their missions include armed attack; inserting, extracting, and resupplying personnel; aerial security; medical evacuation; electronic warfare; mine dispersal; and command and control support.

Psychological operations forces are organized into one active and three reserve psychological groups that vary in number and types of subordinate units depending on their mission and geographic alignment. Their mission is to study and be prepared to influence the emotions, attitudes, and behavior of foreign audiences on behalf of U.S. and allied interests. They operate with conventional and other special operations forces to advise and assist host nations in support of special operations missions such as counterinsurgency, foreign internal defense, and civil affairs programs.

Civil affairs units are comprised of 5 Army Reserve headquarters (3 commands and 9 brigades), 24 Army Reserve battalions, and 1 active battalion. The units' primary function is to establish favorable relationships between the U.S. military and foreign governments and populations. Moreover, civil affairs forces assist military operations through population or refugee control and support to other U.S. agencies.

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The reserve civil affairs units provide professional civilian skills such as police, judicial, logistical, engineering, and other civil functions that are unavailable in the one active unit.

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## **Air Force Special Operations Command and Forces**

The Command has one Special Operations Wing, two Special Operations Groups, and one Special Tactics Group in its active force and one Special Operations Wing and one Special Operations Group in its reserve force. The Command consists of about 9,500 reserve and active personnel.

The Command's primary missions are to organize, train, and equip its units, but it may also train, assist, and advise the air forces of other nations in support of foreign internal defense missions. The Command operates uniquely equipped fixed and rotary wing aircraft for missions that include inserting, extracting, and resupplying personnel; aerial fire support; refueling; and psychological operations. Its aircraft are capable of operating in hostile airspace, at low altitudes, under darkness or adverse weather conditions in collaboration with Army and Navy special operations forces.

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## **Naval Special Warfare Command and Forces**

The Command has two naval special warfare groups, one naval special warfare development group, and two special boat squadrons split between the east and west coasts of the United States. Each special warfare group includes three SEAL teams and one SEAL delivery vehicle team. Each squadron includes subordinate special boat units (three on the east coast and two on the west coast). Naval special warfare forces deployed outside the United States receive support from permanently deployed naval special warfare units located in Panama, Scotland, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The Command contains about 5,500 active and reserve personnel.

The 6 active SEAL teams are organized into headquarters elements and 10 16-man operational platoons. Navy SEALs, like Army Green Berets, are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct primarily direct action, special reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, and counterterrorism missions. They conduct these missions primarily in maritime and riverine environments. SEALs can also directly support conventional naval and maritime operations.

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**Joint Special  
Operations Command**

The Command is responsible for studying joint special operations, requirements and techniques, training and exercises, and tactics. The Command also includes the Joint Special Operations Task Forces, which are responsible for direct action, strategic reconnaissance, and counterterrorism.

# Comments From the Department of Defense

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



SPECIAL OPERATIONS/  
LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2500

February 23, 1994

Mr. Frank C. Conahan  
Assistant Comptroller General  
National Security and International Affairs Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report, "SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: Force Structure and Readiness Issues," dated February 3, 1994 (OSD Code 393539/OSD Case 9600). The Department partially concurs with the report.

While the Department agrees with much of the information reported by the GAO, the DoD does not agree that reserve Sea-Air-Land forces may not be needed. The U.S. Special Operations Command has validated a requirement for 60 operational Sea-Air-Land platoons. Currently, only 48 are operational, and no additional personnel have been authorized. In addition, the Department is satisfied with the progress made by the U.S. Special Operations Command to conduct combat search and rescue in Europe. Additional direction to the Air Force is not necessary.

Additional DoD comments on the report findings and recommendations are provided in the enclosure. The DoD appreciates the opportunity to comment on the GAO draft report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "H. Allen Holmes".

H. Allen Holmes

Enclosure:  
As stated

See comment 1.

See comment 2.

GAO DRAFT REPORT - DATED FEBRUARY 3, 1994  
(GAO CODE 393539) OSD CASE 9600

"SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: FORCE STRUCTURE  
AND READINESS ISSUES"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS

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FINDINGS

- o **FINDING A: Establishment of Special Operations Forces.** The GAO reported that as a result of problems with several special operations missions in the 1980s, including the failed attempt to rescue U.S. hostages from Iran in April 1980, the Congress directed the creation of a joint service special operations command--a command that would be responsible for ensuring the combat readiness of assigned forces. The GAO further observed that, in April 1987, the Secretary of Defense established the U.S. Special Operations Command. The GAO explained that Special Operations forces differ from conventional forces in that they are specially organized, trained, and equipped to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional means.

The GAO reported that on November 14, 1986, the Congress enacted Public Law 99-661, section 1311, to revitalize special operations and correct deficiencies identified in the nation's ability to conduct special operations. The GAO noted that the law directed the President to establish a unified combatant command for special operations to ensure that special operations forces were combat ready and prepared to conduct specified missions. The GAO explained that the law required the Secretary of Defense to assign all U.S.-based active and reserve special operations forces to the Command and special operations forces stationed overseas to the Atlantic, Pacific, Southern, Central, and European combatant commands. (pp. 2-3/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur.

- o **FINDING B: Force Structure is Mostly Inherited.** The GAO reported that many Command force structure changes have been reorganizations to improve command and control. The GAO cited the example that in 1989 the Army converted its 1st Special Operations Command to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command--and one year later, the Air Force converted most of its 23rd Air Force to the Air Force Special Operations Command. The GAO found that various force structure changes have increased the total military personnel strength by about 14.5 percent during the period from FY 1988 through FY 1994. The GAO determined that, as the

Enclosure  
Page 1 of 12

Now on pp. 10-11.

Command's personnel levels increased--the Defense Department overall personnel levels decreased. (pp. 20-21/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur.

- o **FINDING C: Command Uses An Analytical Process to Develop Future Force Structure Needs.** The GAO observed that the Special Operations force structure development process begins with its joint mission analysis. The GAO explained that through the joint mission analysis, the Command develops a mission needs force. The GAO further explained that the mission needs force is analyzed and adjusted by three distinct boards--Force Structure, Aviation, and Maritime Mobility--based on planning factors, basing considerations, and affordability. The GAO noted that the decisions of the boards result in the objective force, which becomes the basis for the force structure section of the Special Operations Master Plan. The GAO pointed out that, based on DoD fiscal guidance, the Command adjusts the force structure to arrive at the program force--which then becomes the basis for the Command's budget request. The GAO observed that the analysis reviews special operations forces by theater and measures the ability of the program force to meet future mission needs derived from scenarios. The GAO assessed that the goal of the analysis is (1) to determine program force capabilities and deficiencies, (2) identify limiting factors, and (3) develop and assess alternative courses of action to address shortfalls in force structure. (pp. 22-23/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur.

- o **FINDING D: National Security Policies Drive Expansive Need for Special Operations.** The GAO reported President Bush's 1991 security strategy shifted U.S. priorities from containing the Soviet Union and preparing for global war in Europe--to stopping regional conflicts against uncertain adversaries. The GAO explained that the new regional defense strategy required maintaining a diverse, highly ready force to meet a broad range of regional security problems--problems that could threaten U.S. interests. The GAO noted that, in January 1993, the Secretary of Defense told the Congress that special operations forces play a role in each element of the new defense strategy--particularly in forward presence and crisis response operations. The GAO pointed out that the DoD "bottom-up" review, which developed military strategies for the post-Cold War era, reinforced the regional defense strategy. In addition, the GAO pointed out that while the DoD indicated that deterring and defeating major regional aggression will be the most demanding requirement of the new defense strategy, U.S. military forces are more likely to be involved in operations short of declared or intense warfare--such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and other intervention operations and special operations forces are particularly well suited for intervention operations. (pp. 23-24/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 18-19.

Now on pp. 19-20.

Now on pp. 20-21.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur.

- o **FINDING E: Demand for Special Operations Forces Has Increased.** The GAO reported that the theater combatant commanders' needs for special operations forces have grown considerably as operations other than war have increased. The GAO reported that deployments of special operations forces increased over 300 percent from FY 1991 through FY 1993. The GAO reported that as a result of the increased peacetime demand for special operations forces, about 50 percent of the Command's planned force structure is to meet war requirements and 50 percent is to provide a peacetime U.S. forward presence in key regions of the world. The GAO pointed out that according to the Command, special operations forces saved thousands of lives by providing skilled personnel to (1) rebuild the civil infrastructure, (2) establish supply networks, and (3) furnish medical assistance and training.
  - **Combat Operations**--The GAO reported that special operations missions might include (1) locating, seizing, or destroying targets, (2) performing strategic reconnaissance, and (3) disorganizing, disrupting, or demoralizing enemy troops. The GAO cited the example that during Operation Desert Storm, special operations units were tasked to eliminate Iraqi radar units and aid conventional forces in locating Iraqi SCUD missile sites.
  - **Peacetime Operations**--The GAO reported that special operations forces have become an integral part of the theater commanders' peacetime strategy. The GAO cited the example that the Southern Command has developed a peacetime engagement plan to accomplish forward presence operations used to execute the theater strategy for countering threats and strengthening democracy and democratic institutions. The GAO also found that the Command plans to use special operations forces to (1) perform counterdrug and counterinsurgency missions, (2) provide assistance to foreign nations, and (3) improve the professionalism of Central and South American militaries. (pp. 24-25/GAO Final Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur.

- o **FINDING E: Readiness Data Showed Slight Improvement in the Command Readiness.** The GAO reported that Status of Resources and Training System data show that, as a whole, the Command's readiness has improved slightly since it was established. The GAO explained that the System compares a unit's resources to those needed to undertake its wartime mission--personnel, equipment and supplies on hand, equipment condition, and training. The GAO noted that the System describes readiness in terms of category levels--or C-levels--which identify the degree to which a unit meets established standards. The GAO pointed out that the DoD ranks

readiness from C-1 to C-4. The GAO explained that a rating of C-1 indicates a unit possesses the required resources to undertake the full wartime mission it was organized or designed to meet and a rating of C-2 to C-4 indicates a unit has progressively fewer of the resources needed to undertake its wartime mission.

- Active Force Readiness--The GAO determined that when the Command was established in 1987, about 22 percent of its units reported C-1 ratings and through May 1993, about 30 percent of the units reported C-1 ratings. The GAO observed that the readiness data showed that 38 percent of the Command's active forces reported C-1 ratings in 1987, which had increased to 43 percent through May 1993. The GAO noted that the Command identified equipment shortages as the primary reasons for ratings less than C-1.
- Reserve Force Readiness--The GAO determined that only 14 percent of the reserve units reported C-1 ratings in 1987 and through May 1993, the reserves had sustained about the same status with only 15 percent of its forces reporting C-1 ratings. The GAO pointed out that shortages in personnel and personnel specialties have been the reserves' primary resource shortfall.

The GAO reported that the average readiness indicators for the active and reserve forces were about C-2 and C-3, respectively, when the Command originated. The GAO concluded that the readiness indicators have remained generally constant, except for the Gulf War period when the readiness of the active forces improved and the readiness of reserve forces declined.

The GAO indicated that, according to the Special Operations Command, the Status of Resources and Training System data does not adequately capture the improved readiness status of its forces--moreover, that the intangible indicators, such as improved equipment, interoperability of forces, and training had increased the readiness of the Command to perform its missions. The GAO cited the example that the Command has identified improved mobility as its most important modernization concern for the 1990s and, as a result, is buying MH-47E and MH-60K Army special operations helicopters to increase low level flight capabilities. The GAO further noted that the Air Force Special Operations Command was buying MC-130H Combat Talon IIs for low level infiltration and resupply operations. The GAO also noted that Navy Special Warfare mobility improvements included the MK V Special Operations Craft, which has greater speed and payload than the older MK III. The GAO also pointed out that according to the Special Operations Command, changes had been made to improve the command and control of special operations forces through improved training, training facilities, and intelligence collection and dissemination. (pp. 27-31/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur. Although the information reported by the GAO is generally accurate, the GAO presentation does not fully explain how the readiness

Now on pp. 24-27.

See comment 3.

data trends for each of the Military Departments impact on the cumulative Status of Resources and Training System averages for the United States Special Operations Command. By combining the unit readiness ratings of all the Army, Navy, and Air Force units in the United States Special Operations Command and computing an overall readiness rating, the GAO does not accurately portray the higher state of readiness of the United States Special Operations Command. Specifically, the largest segment of the United States Special Operations Command is the Active Army component which comprises 31 percent of United States Special Operations Command population. It should be noted that 58 percent of the Army's 59 active force reporting units are C-1, and 83 percent are C-1 or C-2. The Army Reserve, which includes 85 percent of the Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations population and 20 percent of the United States Special Operations overall population, has 7 percent of its 95 units reporting C-1, and 38 percent reporting C-1 or C-2. The Air Force Special Operations Command represents a very different reporting structure. That command has only 21 reporting squadrons. The Air Force Special Operations Command constitutes 23 percent of the total population of the United States Special Operations Command, and 28 percent of the squadrons report C-1, and 76 percent report C-1 or C-2. The Naval Special Warfare Command represents a unique reporting entity for two reasons. First, the Naval Special Warfare Command represents only 13 percent of the population of the United States Special Operations Command, but its 157 reporting units equal 45 percent of the United States Special Operations Command's total number of reporting units. Because each of the units is reported, the Naval Special Warfare Command structure significantly impacts overall United States Special Operations Command readiness ratings. Secondly, Sea-Air-Land units systematically deploy and remain deployed in a C-1 status; however, upon completion of the deployment, they refit, reorganize, and retrain. During this post deployment process the units typically are rated C-4. Thus by design, the Sea-Air-Land deployment and training cycle generates C-4, C-3, and C-2 rated units. This should not be viewed as a readiness problem. However, when the units rated C-2, C-3, and C-4 are averaged into the overall readiness ratings for the United States Special Operations Command, the total average is reduced, even though Sea-Air-Land units have not missed operational missions due to readiness ratings.

- o **FINDING G: Air Force Routinely Performing Combat Search and Rescue Missions Which Limits Training Time for Special Missions.** The GAO reported that under joint doctrine, each Service must provide forces capable of combat search and rescue in support of its own operations--and special operations forces should not be routinely tasked to perform conventional combat search and rescue. The GAO observed that the Air Force Special Operations Command was created in 1990 from the 23rd Air Force, which had combat search and rescue as one of its missions. The GAO noted that the transfer left the Air Force without the specialized aircraft or trained aircrews to conduct the mission. The GAO found that although the Air Force is projected to have the assets it needs to reassume its recovery role from special operations by the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 1994, the Air Force does not plan to

station a rescue squadron in Europe. The GAO observed that the Air Force is studying how best to perform the mission. The GAO concluded, however, that until the Air Force does assume the responsibility, special operations forces will have to continue to perform the mission.

The GAO reported that according to the former Commander of the Special Operations Command's, support for conventional search and rescue operations significantly reduces the readiness of special operations forces. The GAO also reported that personnel responsible for operations within the Air Force Special Operations Command also stated that some post-Desert Storm combat search and rescue operations degraded readiness. The GAO also pointed out that special operations aircrews were unable to participate in scheduled training exercises due to conventional search and rescue missions, which could further impact readiness.

The GAO reported that, in October 1990, Air Force special operations units began conducting conventional combat search and rescue missions of downed pilots during Operation Desert Shield--and continued to perform those missions in Saudi Arabia until relieved by Air Force units in February 1993. The GAO explained that Command deployment data showed that, from April 1991 to July 1993, Air Force special operations personnel deployed 68 times to provide theater combatant commanders with a conventional combat search and rescue capability. The GAO noted that Army Special Forces supported those missions 31 times. The GAO further explained that Army and Air Force special operations personnel and equipment continue to perform conventional search and rescue missions, some of which are classified. (pp. 31-33/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur.

- o **FINDING H: Excess Reserve Forces Could Cost Millions to Maintain.** The GAO reported that in November 1990 the DoD developed budget guidance that directed that three Army National Guard and three Army Reserve Special Forces battalions be deactivated. The GAO noted that the DoD rescinded the deactivation plans for the three Army Reserve battalions pending the results of the Command joint mission analysis. The GAO pointed out that the DoD request for authorization to deactivate the three National Guard battalions was denied by the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 1992. The GAO reported that subsequently, the Command analysis validated the need to deactivate the six battalions and identified further reductions of reserve units. The GAO noted that the six battalions are in the 11th and 19th Special Forces Groups. The GAO indicated that the Command identified the following reserve forces for deactivation:
  - 1-245 Special Operations Aviation Battalion--463 reserve spaces;
  - 19th Special Forces Group--1,042 reserve spaces;

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Now on pp. 28-30.

See comment 4.

- 5th Psychological Operations Group--560 reserve spaces;
- 11th Special Forces Group --1,279 reserve spaces.

The GAO noted that according to the Command (1) those forces are linked to the drawdown of conventional forces in Europe and the Soviet threat and are not needed to meet contingency mission requirements and (2) maintaining the excess reserve structure will cost about \$355 million through FY 1999. (pp. 34-35/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Partially concur. While the GAO discussion regarding identification of excess forces is generally correct, the DoD does not agree that any statutory provisions exist that prevent the Department from reducing reserve force structure. Consequently, the Department has developed a plan to inactivate National Guard and United States Army Reserve units by the end of Fiscal Year 1994. The specific units to be inactivated will be announced by the Department in the second quarter of Fiscal Year 1994. Consequently, the concern that the retention of these forces will waste command resources through FY 1999 is no longer germane.

- o **FINDING I: Reserve Seals May Not Be Needed.** The GAO reported that the Special Operations Command plans to expand its operational Navy Sea-Air-Land platoons by 25 percent, from 48 to 60--in FY 1996 at the earliest. The GAO noted that according to the Command, those additional Sea-Air-Land platoons are needed to meet increased deployments in support of the theater combatant commands. The GAO noted that, although the Command has reported to the Congress that it maintains a force structure of 60 Sea-Air-Land platoons, only 48 platoons are operational and deployable with the 12 remaining platoon equivalents providing manpower to Sea-Air-Land training elements.

The GAO observed that the Command plans to convert existing Sea-Air-Land training elements into operational platoons and request additional positions in the active force to replace the converted training positions and with dedicated staff who would not deploy. The GAO pointed out that the Command presently staffs the training elements with active component personnel who, upon mobilization, would be used to create the 12 additional operational Sea-Air-Land platoons. The GAO noted that, according to the mobilization plan, Sea-Air-Land reservists would then occupy the training positions. The GAO concluded that, if the DoD authorizes the additional positions for the training personnel, the reservists would no longer have a wartime mission. The GAO noted that, when their audit work was completed in December 1993, the Naval Special Warfare Command had no alternative plan for using or eliminating the 318 Sea-Air-Land reserve positions. (pp. 35-36/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 30.

See comment 1.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Nonconcur. The GAO discussion is based on the assumption that additional personnel will be authorized. However, no additional authorizations have been provided. The United States Special Operations Command has a validated requirement for 60 operational Sea-Air-Land platoons. A valid requirement exists for Sea-Air-Land qualified reservists to perform staff (including training) functions in the Sea-Air-Land Team Headquarters, the Naval Special Warfare Task Groups and Units during contingency or general war. In some instances, reservists may deploy overseas to augment the task organization. Veteran operators in staff positions in Operations, Intelligence, Communications and Logistics are crucial to the effective Task Groups/Units performance of their missions.

- o **FINDING J: Command and Services Used Varied Definitions of Special Operations-Peculiar.** The GAO reported that the Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986 assigns the Services responsibility for administering and supporting their forces assigned to combatant commands. The GAO observed that the Special Operations Command memoranda of agreement with the Services are the mechanism by which the Services agree to provide common items and services. The GAO noted that these memorandums define what is peculiar to special operations -- items and services that do not meet the definitions are to be provided by the Services.

The GAO reported that the Joint Chiefs of Staff defined items and services peculiar to special operations as follows:

- "Equipment, materials, supplies, and services required for special operations mission support for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. It often includes nondevelopmental or special category items incorporating evolving technology but may include stocks of obsolete weapons and equipment designed to support indigenous personnel who do not possess sophisticated operational capabilities."

The GAO reported that according to the Command, the above definition is too general to be useful and a new definition is being developed. The GAO found that the Command and the Services have used varied definitions in their agreements. The GAO cited the example that the Command and the Air Force agreed that criticality of need for common items should be part of the definition. On the other hand, the GAO noted that the agreement with the Army does not cite criticality of need as an element for defining special operations- peculiar. The GAO explained that, in contrast, the Army agreement specifically defines "common" as those equipment, items, services, or programs ordinarily found throughout the Army. (pp. 36-37/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur.

Now on p. 31.

- o **FINDING K: Major Force Program-11 Funds Used for Varied Items.** The GAO concluded that, as a result of the varied definitions and interpretations, Major Force Program-11 funds have been used for common equipment and services. The GAO cited the example that during FY 1991-1993, the Command obligated \$787,000 for survival radios the Army and Air Force special operations forces needed despite the commonality of the radios within the Services. The GAO further concluded that the Command (1) included \$4.4 million for more of the radios in its FY 1994 budget request and (2) obligated almost \$26 million during FY 1991 through 1993 for common weapons and ammunition. The GAO reported Command officials agreed that those items were not peculiar to special operations, but indicated Major Force Program-11 funds were used because the Services did not provide the levels of required support.

The GAO asserted that the controversy surrounding the definition of special operations-peculiar is exemplified by the use of Major Force Program-11 funds for an information management network at a total estimated cost of \$73.6 million. The GAO noted that, according to the operational requirements document, the 1987 Army Special Operations Modernization Action Program identified the need for a worldwide information management system that would support Army special operations forces. The GAO found that the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations designated the system as a critical priority--and, as such, the Special Operations Command inherited the requirement. The GAO pointed out that, according to officials with the Command Inspector General, the Army refused to provide funds for the system and after reviewing the operational requirements document, a Command lawyer concluded that the information system was not a system peculiar to special operations. The GAO found that, despite the legal opinion, on November 23, 1992 the Command Requirements Oversight Council approved the development and acquisition of the management information system.

The GAO reported that the Command and the Army are revising their memorandum of agreement. The GAO indicated, however, that according to Command officials, the definition of special operations-peculiar remains a controversial point of negotiation. The GAO pointed out that the Army wants to include in the definition common items of equipment that exceed Army authorization levels and usage rates--requiring the Command to program and budget Major Force Program-11 funds to pay for those items. The GAO noted the Command legal office had disagreed with this position, and stated that adoption of language represents another step in the Army retreat from its responsibilities to provide common items to special operations forces. The GAO observed that as of November 16, 1993, the Army and the Command still had not agreed on a definition and, according to a Command official, when a definition is agreed to--it will be incorporated into Joint Publication 3-05 and used in all memoranda of agreement as they are revised. (pp. 37-39/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur.

- o **FINDING L: Major Force Program-11 Funds Used for Base Operating Support.** The GAO observed that the Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986 assigns the Services responsibility for providing base operating support to the combatant commands. The GAO noted, however, under the Act, the Secretary of Defense may assign the responsibility or any part of the responsibility to other Department components, including the combatant commands.
- **Navy**--The GAO observed that, on December 19, 1991, the Secretary of Defense, through a program budget decision in FY 1993, transferred funding responsibility for the Naval Special Warfare Command base operating support from the Navy to the Special Operations Command. The GAO pointed out that according to the budget decision, the transfer was made to streamline accounting and dispersing systems and align base operating support funds with the Navy policy for host-tenant agreements. The GAO assessed that as a result of the decision, the Navy transferred base operating support funds to the Command for FY 1993. The GAO noted that according to Naval Special Warfare Command officials, the funds were inadequate to meet all base operating support requirements and the Command agreed to make up the shortfall.
  - **Air Force**--The GAO reported that the Air Force retained responsibility for providing base operating support to Air Force units assigned to the Command. The GAO noted, however, the Air Force Special Operations Command chose to spend \$127,000 in FY 1993 Major Force Program-11 funds for base operating support at Hurlburt Field, Florida. The GAO indicated that, according to Air Force Special Operations Command officials, the Air Force failed to provide sufficient funds to meet base operating requirements.
  - **Army**--The GAO reported that the Department of Defense Appropriations Act For Fiscal Year 1994 directed the Special Operations Command to include in its FY 1995 budget request the funds required to reimburse Fort Bragg for the base operations support provided by that installation to U.S. Army special operations forces assigned to Fort Bragg. The GAO indicated that, according to the DoD--(1) this contradicts Department policy and the existing Army and Command memorandum of agreement and (2) the Army special operations forces would be the only tenants at Fort Bragg that will be required to reimburse the installation for common support. (pp. 39-40/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur. However, the direction to the United States Special Operations Command to include funds to reimburse Fort Bragg was not contained in the Department of Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1994. Rather, the direction was included in the House and Conference Committee Reports on that Act.

Now on p. 33.

See comment 4.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- o **RECOMMENDATION 1:** The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Air Force to develop a plan to meet the combatant commander's requirements for combat search and rescue in Europe--the one that has the least impact on special operations assets. (p. 7, p. 40/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 5 and 34.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Nonconcur. The Department is satisfied with the progress made by the U.S. Special Operations Command to conduct combat search and rescue in Europe. The DoD does not agree, therefore, that additional direction to the Air Force is necessary. Current operational war plans require the Air Force to meet the European Command's theater combat search and rescue requirements. The Air Force has sufficient assets (which would require the activation of some reserve units) to meet those requirements. However, since the Air Force rescue revitalization/modernization program is not due to be completed until the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 1994, Air Force special operations forces have been tasked to provide some of the Air Force rescue taskings. Finally, it should be noted that providing combat search and rescue is not the sole responsibility of the Air Force, but is shared between the Military Departments and the United States Special Operations Command.

See comment 2.

- o **RECOMMENDATION 2:** The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense notify the Congress of its plans to eliminate reserve forces which the Command has deemed to be excess. (p. 7, p. 40/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 5 and 34.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur. The Department has developed a plan to inactivate National Guard and United States Army Reserve units by the end of Fiscal Year 1994. The Congress will be notified of the specific units to be inactivated when the Department publishes the unit inactivation list in the second quarter of Fiscal Year 1994.

See comment 4.

- o **RECOMMENDATION 3:** The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense eliminate reserve Sea-Air-Land positions that would be excess if the Special Operations Command receives additional active Sea-Air-Land training positions. (p. 7, p. 40/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 5 and 34.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Nonconcur. As discussed in the DoD response to Finding I, no additional personnel have been authorized for the Sea-Air-Land element. Furthermore, the United States Special Operations Command has a validated requirement for 60 operational Sea-Air-Land platoons. A valid requirement exists for Sea-Air-Land qualified reservists to perform staff (including training) functions in the

See comment 1.

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Sea-Air-Land Team Headquarters, the Naval Special Warfare Task Groups and Units during contingency or general war. In some instances, reservists may deploy overseas to augment the task organization. Veteran operators in staff positions in Operations, Intelligence, Communications and Logistics are crucial to the effective Task Groups/Units performance of their missions.

- o **RECOMMENDATION 4:** The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Special Operations Command and the Military Services to use and apply, on a consistent basis, the agreed-to definition of items and services peculiar to special operations from Joint Publication 3-05. The GAO further recommended that, when expenses that are exceptions to this definition are deemed warranted, they should be brought to the attention of the Secretary of Defense. (p. 7, pp. 40-41/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Partially concur. The Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Military Departments, generally use the special operations-peculiar definition as defined in Joint Publication 3-05. Since it was not the intent of the Congress to establish Special Operations Forces as a separate Military Department, the United States Special Operations Command is dependent upon the Military Department support structures for the majority of its support (i.e., common support). Because the structure and procedures of each Military Department differ, the Office of the Secretary of Defense determined it was impractical to attempt to develop an all encompassing definition for special operations peculiar items and services. The Deputy Secretary of Defense decided that the best means to provide support to the United States Special Operations Command was to develop memoranda of agreement which defined what was common to the Military Departments, and what was special operations peculiar. That was necessary because an item in one Military Department could be considered special operations peculiar, while the same item in another Military Department could be considered common. For example, M-16 rifles in the Army are considered common, but are considered special operations peculiar in the Navy. The Deputy Secretary of Defense memorandum of December 1, 1989, established a mechanism for all parties to identify and forward to the Secretary of Defense funding exceptions to items and services peculiar to special operations. Those memoranda of agreement are tailored to meet the needs of Special Operations Forces by working within the Military Department support systems, and are the appropriate means to address the resources of special operations peculiar items. As discussed in Findings J and K, when necessary, actions are taken to clarify the definition of items or services that are specifically applicable to special operations. For example, the U.S. Special Operations Command and the Army are currently working to clarify their memorandum of agreement regarding Major Force Program-11 funds. Additional Secretary of Defense direction, therefore, is not necessary.

Now on pp. 6 and 34.

See comment 5.

The following are GAO's comments on the Department of Defense's letter dated February 23, 1994.

## GAO Comments

1. The Special Operations Command has identified the requirement for the additional SEAL positions and expects to request approval for those positions in fiscal year 1996 at the earliest. Because the Command has not requested the positions, the Department considered our finding premature and would not say what role the reserve SEALs would have if additional active SEAL positions are authorized. Our position is that if those additional positions are approved and filled, the reserve SEAL positions would be excess.
2. According to Department of Defense officials, the Air Force has a plan to meet combat search and rescue requirements in Europe during a major regional conflict such as Desert Storm; however, it has no plan to meet combat search and rescue requirements for lesser regional operations such as enforcing the no-fly zone and cease-fire in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because operations such as those in Bosnia can last for extended periods of time and degrade the readiness of special operations units, we continue to believe that the Air Force needs to develop a plan to meet its full combat search and rescue requirements.
3. The Department states that there are ways of displaying the Status of Resources and Training System data that could possibly show higher readiness ratings for some service component units. We have no way of confirming or denying this position because the Command does not have complete readiness data for all units from the date the Command was established.
4. We have revised the report to reflect this information.
5. We continue to believe that the definition of items and services peculiar to special operations from Joint Publication 3-05 needs to provide the parameters for the agreements between the Command and the services. Without such parameters, the agreements will continue to have varied definitions, which could lead to varied interpretations of items and services peculiar to special operations.

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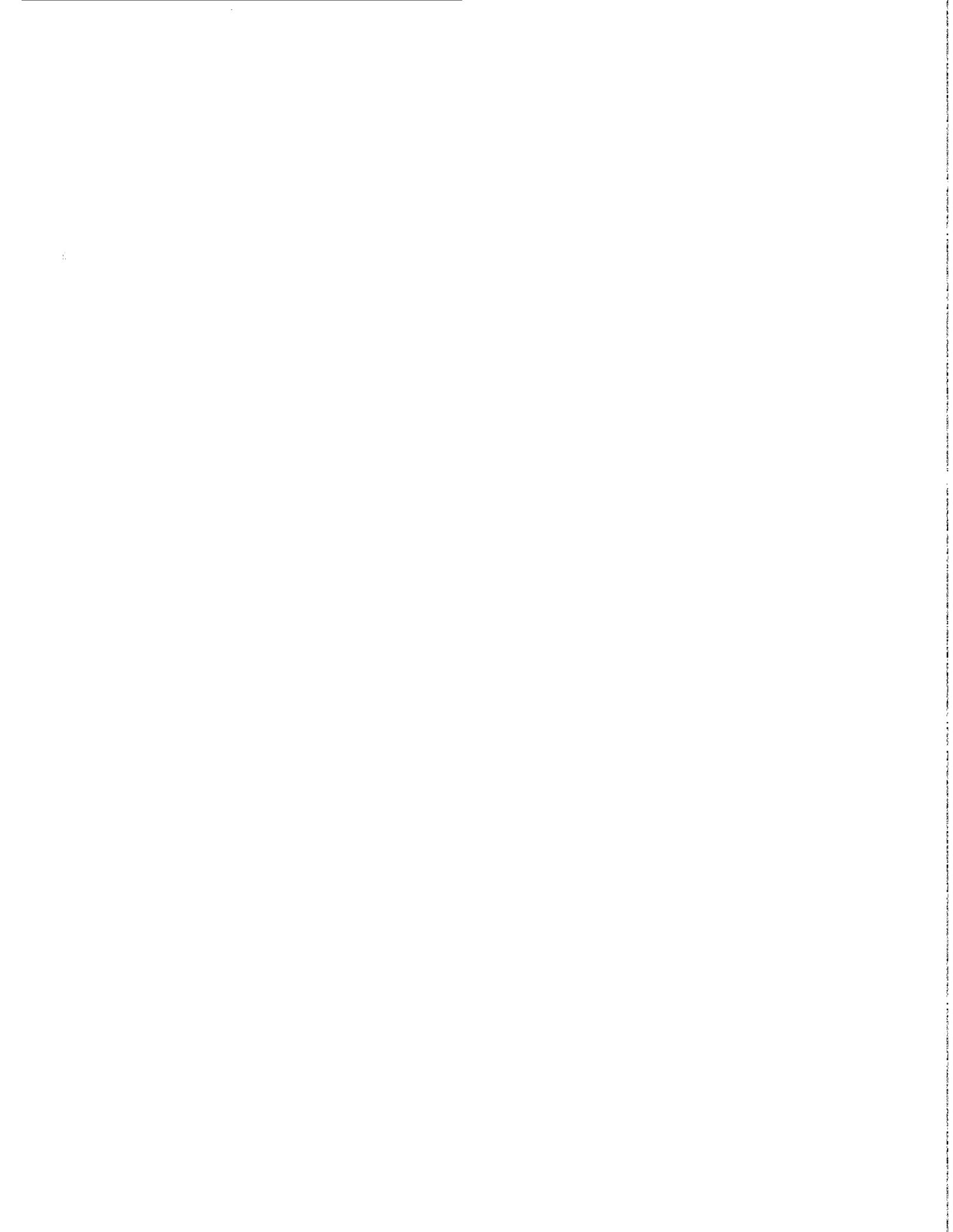
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